

From the corner: Public service and happiness



A recent study by Florida State University Law Professor Lawrence Krieger and University of Missouri Psychology Professor Kennon Sheldon illustrates what many of us have long suspected: public service lawyers are happier and more satisfied than other lawyers, including those in the most prestigious, highly paid positions. The study, which surveyed 6,200 lawyers in four states, concluded that “a

happy life as a lawyer is much less about grades, affluence, and prestige than about finding work that is interesting, engaging, personally meaningful, and is focused on providing needed help to others.”

We at the Office of the Harris County Attorney receive satisfaction knowing that what we do- whether preparing contracts to build roads, acquiring land for flood control projects, defending law suits, encouraging high standards of ethical conduct, going after environmental scofflaws, or handling cases involving neglected children- is done to benefit others. Even our daily tasks- whether redacting documents, opening files, delivering papers, answering phones, paying invoices, preparing petitions, advising our client representatives, or appearing in court- are vitally important to our ability to impact the world around us.

Each of us can be pleased to know that our work is contributing to the well-being of the people of Harris County.

Thank you for your service at the Office of the Harris County Attorney. You can read the full report on lawyer happiness by [clicking here](#).-- Vince

Happy Anniversary!

Thank you for your service to the public:

Tereska Talib	1 year	Melissa Spinks	13 years
Anthony Yet	1 year	Jimmy Jones	21 years
Anutrice Mirza	2 years	Mercedes Leal	25 years

Julie Countiss Joins HCAO

Julie Countiss has been appointed Assistant County Attorney to work in the Litigation Practice Group. Julie comes to our Office from The Berry Firm, where she managed the Houston office and represented clients in personal injury and commercial litigation. In addition to her firm and corporate experience, Julie has provided legal counsel to area non-profits, including The Open Table and Texans for Civil Justice. She is a Teach for America alumna and a former Alief Hastings High School teacher — she even taught Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Fox.



Julie is also the first to receive a welcome basket for new employees. The welcome basket program was established by Cara Protain and is facilitated by Hermelinda Venegas. Baskets include all the office essentials to help new staff get settled in their offices as well as some survival snacks.

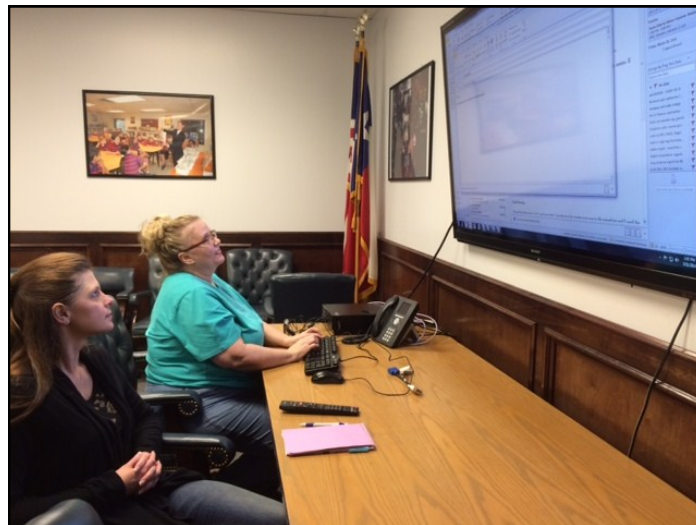


Today is the day. You will not want to miss this star-studded event. **The show starts at 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 9 in the County Attorney Meeting Hall**, in the basement at 1019 Congress Plaza. We will celebrate a year's worth of accomplishments while showcasing the acting, singing, and dancing talents of the HCAO cast and crew.

Legendary actors Tammy Fugate, Erin Werner, David Masquelette, Sandra Hachem, Dan-Phi Nguyen, Oscar Burnias, Brian Quintero, and Jimmy Jones have been hard at work rehearsing scripts penned by award-winning writers Garland McInnis, Doug Ray, and Tammy Fugate. Meanwhile, choreographer to the stars Erin Werner is ensuring dancers Barbara Hernandez, Liz Bomser, Rocio Gomez, Cheryl Davis, and Kesah Roseberry are ready to take the stage.

And it's all hustle bustle behind the scenes with the production crew, which includes Cara Protain, Sally Rodriguez, Mary Palacios, Hermelinda Venegas, Barbara Hernandez, Philip Evans, and Guilly Puente. Finally, Liz Bomser, Cheryl Ratliff, and Rocio Gomez will ensure refreshments are served the star-struck audience. It will no doubt be the event of the season.

Staff Learn Case Management Software



Barbara Hernandez and Melanie Wooten demonstrate features of our case management system. The system links notes, emails, faxes, correspondence, voice mail, and documents to an electronic case file. All documents related to the file are available electronically and through one interface.

Connect5

Five questions for Nathan Bac



Nathan Bac is a County Attorney in the Hospital District Group. He joined our Office in 2012.

What book would you recommend? “America the Beautiful: Rediscovering What Made This Nation Great,” by Ben Carson, M.D.

What was your favorite song in High School? “The Promise,” by When In Rome

Where do you call home? Houston, Texas

If you could time travel what year would you go to? ~30 AD, to witness firsthand the life of Jesus.

Describe yourself in one word. Entertaining.



WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE HARRIS COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, BOTH LAWYERS AND NON-LAWYERS, ADHERE TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL ETHICS AS WE SERVE THE PEOPLE OF HARRIS COUNTY AND STRIVE TO BE THE BEST PUBLIC LAW FIRM IN THE UNITED STATES.

Useful Links

County Attorney [SharePoint](#)
County Attorney [Policy Manual](#)
County Personnel [Regulations](#)

County Attorney [Website](#)
Payroll Reports & Benefits [Online](#)
County Attorney [Directory](#)

Coming Attractions

The Texas District and County Attorneys Association will host a Civil Law Seminar May 28-30 at the San Luis Resort in Galveston. 12 MCLE hours, with 4 hours of ethics.

More information is available on the [TDCAA website](#).

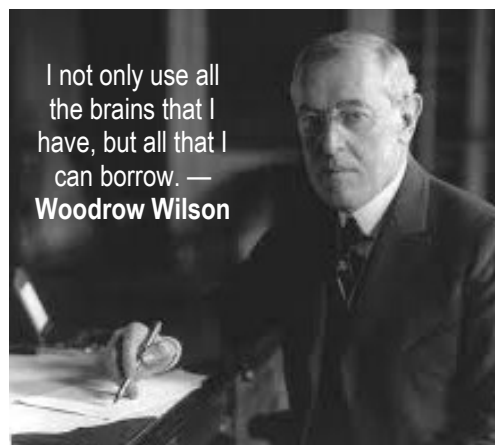


Exhibit Commemorates Mike Driscoll



Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan visits the Mike Driscoll exhibit.

Retired Harris County Attorney Mike Driscoll served as Harris County Attorney from 1981 through 1996. He was born March 26, 1946 in Houston and passed away on February 19, 2013. He was always proud of his Harris County roots and the work of the Harris County Attorney's Office. To commemorate his birthday, our Office, with help from the Harris County Archives, installed a new exhibit about Mike's life in the display cases at the entrance to the Law Library, first floor, 1019 Congress Plaza. You can view the display during regular library hours; weekdays, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.



The exhibit tells the story of Mike Driscoll the politician and public servant. One display case showcases Mike's love for politics and policy from his days as a teenager serving as a Congressional page to his election to Harris County Attorney in 1980. The second case highlights the Office's achievements during his tenure, including text from *Driscoll v. Harris County*, a landmark case establishing the authority of the County Attorney to represent the County and its elected officials.

Harris County Archivist Sarah Jackson and Law Clerk Kristen Lee work on the Driscoll exhibit.

Congress Plaza 17th floor Remodeling on Track

Construction has begun on the 17th floor build out that will house many of our Protective Services staff beginning in September. For the next few weeks, construction crews will be using an interior elevator to move supplies, which will cause some inconvenience for staff as one elevator will be out of service. However, crews are busy installing a temporary elevator to the exterior of the building that will also be used to move construction supplies. We expect this exterior elevator to be completed within the next three weeks and remain functional through June.



Repairs to the roof began in February to ensure the 17th floor was properly sealed and ready for the build out. Crews are actively working on both the roof and 17th floor in an effort to quickly complete the project. We have made arrangements for offices in other buildings for those who find the construction noise too bothersome. Please contact Cara Protain if you need to move offices during the construction.

Parks Board and HCFCD Work to Enhance Trails

Assistant County Attorney Mitzi Turner, who is assigned to assist the Harris County Flood Control District, completed an agreement between the Houston Parks Board and the District that will enable the Parks Board to improve areas around hike and bike trails on District property. The trails will be constructed throughout the City of Houston pursuant to an Interlocal Agreement between the District and the City. This agreement is one of several being implemented among the Parks Board, the City of Houston, and the Flood Control District to provides public/private funding for acquisition, management, development, maintenance, and improvement of parks and open spaces.



Harris County employees will be able to receive a \$40 per month subsidy toward their METRO transportation costs, beginning May 1, 2014. [Click here](#) for more information. Come by 1310 Prairie, Suite 230 (training room) from 11 am to 2 pm on April 21, 22 and 28 to speak with representatives about the program.